

Department of Correction

Testimony of Brian K. Murphy, Acting Commissioner

Transportation Committee

Raised Bill No. 410, *An Act Concerning Persons Who Transport Patients or Clients Under the Care, Control or Custody of a State Agency*

March 10, 2010

Good afternoon, Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee. I am writing to express the Department of Correction's concerns about the potential impact of Raised Bill No. 410, *An Act Concerning Persons Who Transport Patients or Clients Under the Care, Control or Custody of a State Agency*.

As we testified on similar legislation in the past, the Department of Correction takes seriously its mission to protect the public, its staff and the inmates in our custody. In keeping with this, the Department ensures that our vehicles are regularly maintained and that we transport inmates in a safe manner. The Department also has written policies and procedures that address vehicle inspection and safety, employee license requirements, the use of seatbelts, by both staff and inmates, and the transportation of inmates with disabilities. For example, prior to the daily use of a vehicle, there is a safety inspection to check the fluid levels, tire inflation and the operation of the lights and brakes. The Department's Administrative Directive 6.4, Transportation and Community Supervision of Inmates, can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/doc/LIB/doc/PDF/AD/ad0604.pdf>.

The Department is particularly concerned about the provision in subsection (b) of the bill, which would require that any person who operates a state transport vehicle not have any moving violations or similar motor vehicle infractions during the one-year period prior to the operation of that state vehicle. Additionally, the bill's provisions would require the Department to review the driving record of any individual operating a transport vehicle every six months. As an example, would this mean that a correctional officer who receives a speeding ticket in their personal vehicle or is in a minor accident that results in the receipt of an infraction would have to be removed from the Correctional Transportation Unit and not authorized to drive transport vehicles? If that were the case, the operations of the Department could be severely impacted. The Unit is responsible for statewide inmate transportation. The Unit on a yearly basis securely transports more than 120,000 inmates a total of more than one million miles, for sentence review hearings, court appearances, medical appointments, halfway house placements, discharges and in and out-of-state transfers. Parole and escort officers throughout our 17 facilities also transport offenders on a daily basis. The Department employs more than 4,100 correctional officers. At any time, either in response to an emergency or during the regular course of his or her duties, the officer may have to transport an inmate. To require the agency to check the driving record of each employee who may potentially transport an inmate would be a burdensome and costly undertaking.

Currently, appropriate staff regularly reviews accident reports and complaints to determine if there has been a motor vehicle violation or lack of compliance with agency

policy or procedure. Additionally, the Department of Administrative Services has established strengthened accountability for vehicle use, setting up online complaint procedures and assigning compliance responsibility to high level officials who are designated as agency transportation administrators. The Department is confident that its current policies and procedures ensure that our vehicles are well maintained and that inmates and offenders are transported in a safe and secure manner.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department of Correction's views on Raised Bill No. 410.